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NOTES

HELMINTHOLOGIC INVESTIGATIONS

The departure of the expedition, under the direction of Dr. R. T. Leiper, Helminthologist of the London School of Tropical Medicine, to the Eastern Tropics, is an event which must prove of considerable scientific importance. Accompanying Dr. Leiper is a medical officer seconded by the admiralty, Surgeon E. L. Atkinson, R.N., who, since his return from the Scott Antarctic Expedition, has been working at the London School of Tropical Medicine on pathologic specimens he brought back from South Polar regions. The personnel of the expedition is further perfected by the presence of a zoologist, Mr. A. Cherry-Garrard, who served as assistant zoologist in the late Antarctic Expedition. The funds necessary for the investigation have been found partly from the bequest of the late Lord Wandsworth to, and now under the control of, the London School of Tropical Medicine, and partly they have been contributed to by the Tropical Disease Research Fund of the Colonial Office.

The primary object of the expedition is to ascertain the mode of spread of the trematode diseases of man.

Facilities for investigation have been afforded by several countries, and in Sumatra the United States Rubber Company have specially invited the expeditionary party to study the helminths as they affect the workmen on their rubber estates.

In a previous leader in this journal we drew attention to the solidarity of scientific investigation, citing as an instance the bearing Arctic and Antarctic pathologic and zoologic findings had on our geographical knowledge of the spread of disease, and of the limitations or otherwise of pathologic germs by heat and cold. The association of experts with a first-hand knowledge of these subjects in the frigid zones is of particular interest on the occasion of this the most recent scientific expedition to the Tropics.

The intestinal parasites met with in man in the Tropics might well be termed legion, and no medical practitioner who deals with tropical ailments at home or abroad can afford to do aught as a first and stereotype item of practice but to administer an anthelmintic, or at least a simple purge, so as to ensure that there is no worm or its ova complicating the symptoms of any of the intestinal derangements that may come to him for treatment. How often even the most skilful doctor in the Tropics has had cause to repent the non-observance of this practical axiom. Intestinal fluxes ascribed to dysentery, acute, chronic or intermittent sometimes prove intractable to the customary remedies for dysenteric lesions, and the cause of the resistance to their action is not detected until the patient goes to another doctor, who, administering an anthelmintic, clears up the mystery, to the chagrin of the aforesaid and the loosening of the unflattering tongue of the sufferer. Apart, however, from the mere clinical aspect of the good this expedition may do, there are larger and more important factors to be considered, namely, the public health and the commercial points of view. These are intimately associated. The good health of the workers in a mine, on a rubber, tea or coffee plantation, or on any commercial undertaking where men are employed in large numbers, affects the commercial value of the undertaking they are engaged on to the extent that it may have to be abandoned by the capitalist owing to the monetary losses ill-health entails. Such a state of things affects the whole world by the fact that many necessary articles of food become dearer not only locally, but universally, and the tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, rice, tapioca, sago, etc., of our ordinary diet is enhanced in price. Thirdly, the scientific advance likely to ensue from the expedition may be hoped to be great and lasting. The men engaged on it have a high scientific reputation and their work is sure to be sound and reliable. It is to be hoped that our knowledge of bilharziosis will be advanced, that ankylostomiasis will be rendered more capable of being controlled, and that the flora of the intestine generally will be placed on a surer footing than obtains at present.—*Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene,* March 16, 1914.